STORIES OF ALL SORTS FOR ALL PEOPLE.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 341. FOR WEEK ENDING JULY 13, 1895. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

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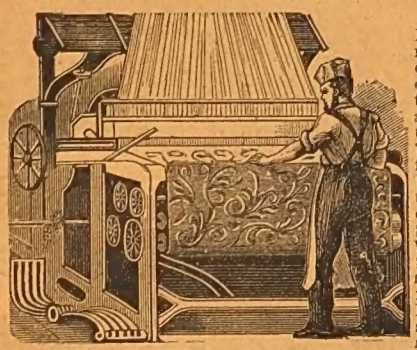

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 341.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING JULY 13, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

A DELICIOUS freshness pervaded the woods. The sparrows flitted in and out among the branches, and sang to one another their sweetest songs. On a projecting bough a finch had comfortably settled himself, and was whistling with the utmost nonchalance the sole number contained in the poor rascal's *répertoire*.

It was a rare delight, indeed, to wander through this natural loveliness after leaving, scarcely two hours before, the stifling atmosphere of a railway-carriage; and the pathway, through which I loitered in happiest mood, was a narrow one. The highway, indeed, would have conducted me more quickly to the desired haven, but on this most magnificent summer day I very naturally chose the longer walk through one of the most beautiful bits of forest in the neighbourhood.

Suddenly the sunshine glinted more brightly through the trees. It must be that I was approaching a clearing, and, in truth, a few more steps brought me to an open place, which spread itself out like an island in the heart of the wood. Near the edge of the clearing knelt a man who was industriously filling a sack. Could it be earth that he was scooping up—and for what purpose?

I stole nearer. That which the man was gathering was the peculiar nest of the wood ant, cunningly put together from bits of plants and pine needles. All this the man put into a wire sieve, through which the ants and their white larvæ fell into the sack.

"Good success?" said I, with friendly greeting.

The ant-hunter looked up, and pushed back a little his old felt hat. Then he said: "It will do, sir. There isn't anybody in the neighbourhood who cares to be a rival in the business."

"Indeed! Has anyone any objection to it?"

"Hm! yes. The work makes one look so!" said the ant-hunter, and his eyes ran over his own shabby exterior.

He wore a dirty and ragged brown coat, was bare-footed, and pressed upon his frowsy head was a crumpled hat of doubtful colour. Between his teeth he held a short pipe, the rudely fantastic head of which he might have carved himself. The old stump must have been the dearest thing he called his own, for even when he spoke it did not leave his lips.

I had never before seen an ant-hunter, although he is a characteristic feature of the Alps, so I sat down upon the stump of a tree to watch him at his work.

"You won't see anything very remarkable," said he, shaking the sieve. "My work is simple enough."

He spread out a linen cloth, fastened down its four corners with wooden pins, and surrounded the whole with pine branches. Then he took the sack and shook its contents out upon the cloth. Immediately the lively little creatures seized their babies, and sought to hide them among the sheltering twigs. Thereupon the ant-hunter carefully brushed these twigs with a coarse rag, and the ants remained hanging to the twigs, while the larvæ lay clearly distinguishable upon the cloth spread out below.

"My crop is gathered for to-day," said he, thrusting his booty into the sack.

"And does this business bring you in a living?" I asked.

"Oh! it'll do. The dealers pay me pretty well, and the amount I need for my living——" He did not finish the sentence, but a sad smile flitted over his face.

While his work had been going on, his pipe had gone out, and he drew out now a closely-tied tobacco pouch. It was empty. I could see that the old man was greatly disappointed, and that after his hard work he had counted upon this modest enjoyment. Help, however, was at hand; for although no smoker myself, I always carry tobacco with me on these mountain excursions. It is an "open sesame" when even the jingle of coin is ineffectual—no Alpine shepherd can resist it. Such a packet I took from my pocket now, and opening it, offered it to the ant hunter.

"Here is some. Try it, and see if it suits you."

What had I done? The man stood as though transfixed, his eyes staring. A shudder ran through his body.

"Sir!" he burst forth, but excitement would not let him proceed further.

"Take it! I beg of you," said I.

Upon this a curious change came over his countenance. A suspicious moisture appeared in his eyes. His bosom rose and fell, and involuntarily he stretched out his hand for the little packet.

"Sir," he faltered; "sir, excuse me! but it is fully twelve years since a human being has offered me a kindness."

"You—avoid people?" said I, perplexed.

"Or they me, which amounts to the same thing," said he bitterly.

I looked narrowly at him. He dropped his eyes.

"But they are right!" he went on, as if talking to himself. "It is indeed a disgrace to associate with a gaol bird!"

He stopped as though he expected me to order him off. He waited in vain, however; for, though astounded at his disclosure, I said not a word.

"Forgive me, sir," said he with surprising quietness. "The miserable business belongs to years gone by. I never like to stir it up. But as you have been so kind, I would not have you get a wrong impression of me; so listen, and despise me if you can."

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He packed up his implements, threw his sack over his shoulder, and started on his way.

"I'm bound for S.," said I. "Are you going the same way?"

"The same, whichever way you go. I am everywhere—or rather, nowhere—at home."

We walked on, and soon entered again the magnificent wood. But its beauty found me indifferent now. I was all absorbed in the mysterious man at my side, whose eyes were fixed intently upon the mossy earth.

"You were going to tell me your story," said I, taking up the conversation where we had left off.

"I was going to—yes. But really, now, I'm almost sorry I said so. However, I promised, and I must keep my word—for, somehow, you're different from the rest."

He struck a match and lighted his pipe, which he had already filled with my tobacco.

"One would never think, to look at me now," said he, after a few pulls at his pipe, "that I was the son of a rich farmer. Ah! truly, time can do strange things with men. My father—blessed be his memory!—was wrong when he so often said, nearly thirty years ago, that his wild boy wouldn't live to see many years. I've seen only too many of them!

"There was my brother Xavier—an entirely different sort of fellow—my exact opposite. While I wandered the whole day long in the woods, he would sit poring over books thick with dust even in our grandfather's day, which he found in the garret. In the catechism he stood at the head. The pastor had not met so industrious a boy in years.

"And I? Oh! I was good for nothing, who deserved a whipping every day. I got it often enough, too, and it didn't agree so badly with me either, for I grew to be such a big fellow as couldn't be matched in the neighbourhood.

"I think at one time there wasn't a village fair in the vicinity where I didn't play the rowdy. This would have been a pretty bad state of affairs if it had lasted long, but an end soon came to it—an end which I would gladly have exchanged for an honest stab in a public-house brawl. It happened thus:

"Can you see, sir, that old tumble-down hut over there, between those two firs? Twelve years ago that was the home of an old day-labourer. It is easy to be seen that wealth had no place there; but the house was kept by Marie, the old man's daughter, a girl so pretty that the angels in heaven might have rejoiced to look at her. What wonder was it that I often stopped to chat with her over the fence, or fasten a nosegay in her bodice, on my way home?

"Marie, the old man's daughter.

"Well, the summer passed away; and when winter came on, raw and cold, and I had no excuse for wandering among the mountains, still something drew me irresistibly to those old paths, and I could not let a single day go by without seeing Marie.

"Her father saw how matters were going, but he made no objections; for while he knew that I was a wild sort of a scamp, he did not believe there was anything really bad in me. And he was not mistaken.

"The time came at last when I must acquaint my father with the state of affairs. Oh! but you should have seen, sir, the storm it raised! It had never entered into my lovesick brain that Marie was the daughter of a poor peasant! The old man was stubborn, and I equally so. For six weeks I did not sit down to a meal with him. Xavier, in the meanwhile, was all devotion. And he was right—my noble brother!—for was I not making my choice between Marie and my share of the property?

"Just then it seemed as if heaven itself meant to spoil his calculations. The dreaded day for the military draft came on. I had the year before drawn the lucky number which exonerated me from service. It was now Xavier's turn to try the wheel of Fortune.

"He drew a blank—and, unless a substitute should be provided, he must within a few days join the army.

"My father was inconsolable. A substitute was no easy thing to obtain, especially as the very air seemed full of ominous portents, and any day might come the news that war had been declared.

"A thought flashed through my mind. I swallowed my pride on the instant, and once more entered the old man's presence.

"'Father,' said I, 'if you will give your consent to my marriage with Marie, I will be Xavier's substitute.'

"Three days later, I was wearing the Kaiser's uniform."

The ant-hunter stopped for an instant, and looked about him in silent admiration.

"It is a beautiful little bit of earth—this fatherland," he went on to say, "and I have always loved it. My grandfather gave his life for it. He was killed in the year 1809 in a battle with the French. He little dreamt, good man, that a grandson of his would cover his untarnished name with disgrace, and, shut up in a fortress as a cowardly betrayer of his prince, curse the day that ever he was born!

"And can you imagine, sir, who brought me there? A miserable rascal! The offscouring of humanity!—may the earth swallow him up! By heaven! I was not bad, but they were bound to have me so, and the one who can most congratulate himself on his success is no other than Xavier—my precious brother Xavier!

"It was not enough that he had robbed me of my father's heart; he must take from me that for which I had sacrificed my freedom.

"Through what treachery he managed it I could never find out. Suffice it to say, I had been scarcely six months in the army, when a fellow from my native village did me the friendly service to tell me that the names of Xavier and Marie had been called out three times from the altar.

"At first I only ridiculed the idea, but later I was convinced that it was only too true.

"Do you see that blade of grass there, sir? Whichever way the wind blows strongest, that way it blows—a picture of a woman's heart! From that day I lost my faith in humanity.

"Oh, but it was a fearful blow to me! I thought I was going to lose my mind. Only one thing seemed plain to me. I must see the miserable pair, and avenge myself.

"The day on which they were to be married, I was on my way home. I had asked for no furlough; I had thought of none. All unwittingly I had become a deserter.

"At last I was within sight of my goal. Already I could hear the church bells ringing, and shuddered at their tones. They were the funeral knell of my fool's happiness. Oh, how I longed for wings! Perhaps I could get there yet, and stop this horrible thing, and then—but no! strength failed me. My limbs were like lead, and only with difficulty could I drag myself along.

"When I reached the church I was too late. The bridal procession was just coming out. I can see them now as if it had happened only yesterday. Oh, that a thunderbolt had fallen from heaven and transfixed them all! But, ah! no. The sun up there shone brighter than ever, the birds sang in

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the great linden trees, and underneath them the village musicians struck up a lively waltz.

"It was as if everything had conspired together to mock me. I could bear it no longer. In a rage, I picked up a stone from the road and dashed towards Xavier. One shriek, then another—and then all was still."

"You killed him?" said I, horrified.

"Killed him!—A fortnight later I found myself imprisoned in a fortress. To-day, by particular favour of the Kaiser, I am again free—a ragged ant-hunter. And Xavier? Do you see, sir, that big house over there? It is the finest in the neighbourhood. There my brother lives with his wife and several children. Behold the righteous reward which Heaven metes out! Can one be surprised that I have lost my faith?"

The ant-hunter pressed his hat low upon his forehead, gruffly bade me good-bye, then struck into the path among the bushes on our left which led over a stony hillside to an isolated farmhouse, where he hoped, without doubt, to dispose of his curious wares.

Lost in thought, I picked my way along the rough path to the village, whose church steeples were reflected in every direction by the glowing rays of the sun, which, in its setting, looked like a magnificent carbuncle.

Slowly and laboriously the dark shadows climbed from the valley up the mountain. But no sweet, refreshing breeze announced the approach of evening. A sultry oppressive heat hung over the entire region, and a black cloud, like a chariot drawn by invisible horses, came up in the farthest west as the advance guard of a menacing storm.

S—— is one of those pretty little villages which these high mountains hide by the hundred among their valleys. Its largest building, next to the church, is its tavern, which offers the friendliest of hospitality.

As I entered the public room in my easy-going manner, the lamp was burning. By a corner table sat several peasants, with their beer mugs before them. I stepped past them towards an open window and looked out.

It had already grown very dark, and the whole heavens, as far as the eye could reach, were enveloped in black, dangerous-looking clouds. Every now and then there would be a bright flash on the farthest horizon where the mountain peaks kissed the clouds, and then would come a response in low, heavy growls from unfathomable abysses.

Scarcely ten minutes later a wild hurricane was in full blast. Heavy drops fell pattering upon the ground. Lightning flashes came thick and fast; and from the church tower pealed forth the storm bell.

The bar-room door creaked on its hinges, and a man, bent and dripping with rain, appeared within it. Without a word, he stepped in, and retired quickly to a dark corner. It was the ant-hunter.

The landlady sat by the stove and knitted. Only from time to time, as an especially blinding flash would shoot across the heavens, would she let her work fall in her lap and make quickly the sign of the cross. She had indeed noticed the new guest, but evidently did not think him worthy of a second glance.

"A dram!" said the ant-hunter roughly. The landlady went on with her knitting.

"A dram!" came more violently from the corner. That took effect. Slowly the woman got up; more leisurely than was necessary she went to the cupboard, and finally placed, with scant courtesy, the desired liquor before her guest. The latter looked at her in a curiously mocking way.

"Aren't you glad to see me?" said he. "I have the same right to sit here as the others. I pay my bills."

At the table where the peasants sat, there had been a great commotion ever since the arrival of the ant-hunter. There was much putting of heads together, very animated whispering, and an industrious passing about of the pitcher.

"Landlady!" finally cried the principal speaker of the company, a broad-shouldered, thick-set man, "the pitcher is empty. If you want to fill it again, please to notice that we're not going to sit in the same room with a gaol bird."

The ant-hunter shrank at the tones of his voice.

"Xavier!" he faltered.

The man so designated caught the word, and, with flushed face, and holding his oaken stool in his hand, took a few steps forward.

"Now," said he, trembling with excitement, "there is the door!"

The ant-hunter had risen. He seemed strangely calm.

"Xavier," said he, "you are giving yourself unnecessary trouble. Your scorn no longer irritates me. Once have I raised my hand against you in revenge, but I ought not to have done it. Now I am waiting until the hour itself comes."

A blinding light flooded the whole room. Then came a fearful clap. The windows rattled. With a shriek, the landlady sprang up, and all rushed to the window.

"That struck!" said the ant-hunter, and sat quietly down again.

Outside, deepest darkness reigned. In vain did we seek to pierce it. Suddenly, a column of fire mounted to heaven; the whole village was as light as day.

"O God! my farm buildings!" cried Xavier, burying his face in his hands.

"I believe the hour is here!" said the ant-hunter, and emptied his glass.

From the towers sounded again the storm bells. Gruesome were the shrill tones as they rang through the darkness of the night.

"Fire! Fire!" was next heard through the village, and the startled people ran hither and thither in the wildest excitement. Windows were thrown open, doors creaked on their hinges, and everybody rushed towards the wooded ridge, from the foot of which a mighty pyramid of flame rose towards the sky.

Shrieking and crying, the frightened women and children begged their husbands and fathers not to expose themselves to danger.

But their alarm was groundless. They had nothing to fear from that scene of horror. Not a finger was lifted to bring help to that stricken home. God Himself had hurled the thunderbolt, and where He kindles the fire—so it is related shudderingly from generation to generation of the peasant folk—billows of water are powerless to extinguish it.

Idly, therefore, stood hundreds of people before the finest farmhouse in the valley, and gazed with impotent horror into the flames which would soon engulf it.

Placed . . . the desired liquor before her guest.

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With dishevelled locks, and wild despair in his eyes, Xavier appeared now and then and threw out whatever came to his hand, howsoever worthless it might be.

The wretched man had lost his senses. A group of women had gathered about the well, and in their midst lay the farmer's wife, who had dropped down there utterly exhausted from fright and excitement. She had been with the children in the house when the lightning struck the adjoining barn and set it on fire. When she flew from the house, the rafters were already ablaze.

The women were bathing her head with the fresh well-water when she opened her eyes and looked anxiously about.

"Friedel, Lorie!" she cried, and, with the words, pressed the sobbing children to her breast.

"Merciful Heaven! My little Tony!" she suddenly shrieked, springing to her feet. "He lies up there in his cradle, and will be burned to death!"

Horror held the bystanders spell-bound. It was heartrending to see the poor mother in her despair. It did not seem possible for a human being to offer help. Already the flames were bursting from the windows. Even Xavier had been forced to desist from his labours. With singed hair and clothing he appeared now in the doorway.

"My baby! My baby! Save my baby!" moaned the mother, wringing her hands.

No one stirred. Any attempt would have been foolhardy.

"Give me my child, or I shall die!" she cried again, and rushed herself towards the scorching, fiery furnace as if to snatch her darling from its depths. Just then a heavy hand was laid upon her shoulder, holding her back.

"Don't do that, Marie," she heard a rough voice say. "You have made me a criminal, now I will take my revenge."

An icy chill ran through my veins at these words. It was the ant-hunter who spoke.

"Joseph! Good heavens! Would you kill my child?" cried the mother, and in her desperation she clung about his knees.

Quick as lightning the ant-hunter pushed her from him and rushed himself into the billowing flames. A cry of horror burst from all who saw him. The unhappy man had voluntarily gone to his death. Any instant the rafters might fall in, and if he were not suffocated with the smoke they would bury him in their ruins.

"He lives."

A few breathless, horrible moments went by. Silently all eyes were fixed upon the fire-wreathed windows; when, suddenly, there appeared at the top one a figure holding a black object high in his hands.

"Catch it!" sounded from above. Twenty hands were stretched into the air, and caught the cradle which the ant-hunter dropped down to them.

A low whimpering issued from it.

"He lives!" were the joyful words that rang from the heart of the mother.

"He lives!" fell with a hollow sound from the window above; and the whole house, with a fearful crash and tumble, seemed to repeat the words.

The handsome farmhouse disappeared as if by magic, and in its place a charred ruin yawned horribly.

"Joseph!" shrieked the farmer's wife, bethinking herself of the rescuer of her child.

All was still.

"He is avenged!" said I, half aloud, and turned away to hide my tears.

MILTON'S TRANCE.

It was ten years ago that the facts occurred of which I am about to tell you. I was then a young fellow of eight-and-twenty, and I had an office and growing practice in London. My patients were all of the wealthier class, and, as a rule, very highly educated. By my constant intercourse with this class of people I obtained an insight into, and information about, subjects to which I had formerly never given any attention. I also made many acquaintances, who were valuable helps to me, both in an intellectual and professional way.

One of these acquaintances was a young lawyer, who had a fair practice, notwithstanding the fact that he had been in London for less than a year. Perhaps, as my story concerns him, a brief description of him will not go amiss. He was rather tall, of a commanding figure, and was what you would call a handsome young fellow. But the most striking thing about him, and that which invariably attracted a stranger's attention, was his eyes. They were piercingly black, large and brilliant, and, when he looked at you, he seemed to read your very thoughts. He was well educated, and a good conversationalist.

His one hobby, however, was hypnotism, and, as I was much interested in the matter myself, we made our investigations and experiments together. One evening he entered my office, where I was busy at my desk, and said rather excitedly, "I have just made a discovery. I possess the hypnotic power!"

I at once became greatly interested, and asked him to give me an example of his newly-acquired power. He agreed to do it, and, calling my attention to my office cat, which was asleep by the fire, he bade me watch his experiment. Fixing his eyes upon the cat, he willed her to get up. In a moment she stirred uneasily, then she rose and her eyes met his. The effect was startling. "Die," he said, in a monotonous tone of voice. "Die, die, die!"

The cat staggered like a drunken thing, walked a step or two, and then fell on her side. I went over and picked her up. She was dead.

"Are you satisfied?" he asked, turning to me with a smile on his face.

"Perfectly," I replied.

There was nothing very marvellous in it to me, as I had seen others make people and animals do their every wish, but I had never seen anyone sap the entire life out of a creature as he had done, and I knew that he possessed the hypnotic power to a degree that was startling.

Long into the night we discussed his power, so lately discovered, and I proposed a plan by which he might do some experimenting, and aid me in my practice at the same time. I knew that he was about to take a holiday for two months, and I suggested that he should give up going away, and enter my employ as an aid. I would then give him a chance to operate upon my patients in the case of amputation and painful operations, when I should otherwise be obliged to use chloroform or ether.

He fell in with the idea eagerly, and the next week entered

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my employ as an assistant. Whenever there was a painful operation to perform, Kegerly first hypnotised the patient, and then I would perform it. The knowledge that he possessed such a power was, of course, a secret, for it would never have done to have had it known that I was employing such a power in my practice. We had wonderful success in working together. In every case he controlled the patient beautifully while in the hypnotic trance.

At that time comparatively little was known of hypnotism, and we made some important discoveries in regard to it. We found that the hypnotic trance resembled sleep to a great extent, the only radical difference being that, whereas anyone can awaken a sleeping person, only the operator who puts the person in a trance can awaken him; also that sometimes breathing was imperceptible.

One night we were both seated in my office, when there came a summons for me to go at once to the house of a rich M.P. named Milton. The messenger simply knew that his master had met with a bad accident. Not knowing how serious it might be, I told Kegerly to get ready and accompany me. We drove to the house, and then I found that Milton had fallen from his horse while riding and sustained a compound fracture of his right leg.

The operation of setting the broken limb would be one of extreme pain; therefore, when we three were alone in the room, I told Kegerly to hypnotise him. Milton succumbed in an instant, much to our surprise, as it usually took from one to three minutes to put a patient in a trance.

"Your power must be unusually strong to-night," I remarked to Kegerly.

"I never felt it half as strong before," he replied.

I immediately went to work on our patient, and in an hour I had the leg nicely set in splints. Then I told my assistant to awaken Milton, and I started to put up a window. Just as I turned to come back, I heard Kegerly cry out, like a tortured soul, "My God! I cannot awaken him!" I jumped to Milton's side, a horrible fear besetting me, and placed my hand over his heart, My worst fears were realised; the man was stone dead.

Kegerly and I stood there and stared at each other for a few dreadful moments, during which neither spoke. The look on his face was horrible. We both realised that he had, by an over-application of his fiendish power, sapped the life out of the man before us, even as he had the life of the cat in my office.

Suddenly Kegerly started for the open window. As he reached it, he turned to me, and said, in a voice that was husky with agony: "When this is discovered, tell the whole truth; that will absolve you. As for me, I am branded with the brand of Cain; I am a murderer, but I will never be taken." As he spoke, he sprang from the window and disappeared.

My situation can be imagined. I shudder even now as I think of that moment. I had been called in to perform a simple operation, which, though painful, could not have proved fatal to any one, had I been content to employ natural methods. I realised then for the first time, in all its intensity, the wrong I had been doing in allowing such a power to be used upon my patients.

I did not dare, I could not, face the wife and children of the dead man, and tell them that I had allowed their husband and father to be murdered. For the first time in my life I was a coward.

Seizing my hat and coat, I lowered myself from the window, and passed into the street. Hailing a passing cab, I drove to the police-station, and made a clean breast of the whole affair, and implored the sergeant to send some friend of the family to break the fearful tidings. I was promptly locked up, accused of being an accessory to the crime, and spent that night in prison. What a night that was! I knew that, if I escaped sentence, my practice in London, or even anywhere in England, was ruined. I never could be anything again.

At first I thought I could not bear it, the shame, dishonour, and condemnation of my brother physicians. Then I thought of poor Kegerly, and realised that his lot was worse than mine. I paced my cell all night. Morning brought a piece of startling intelligence. A messenger hurriedly entered my cell, and told me that Milton was not dead, but in an hypnotic trance so nearly resembling death as to deceive even myself. This was a great relief to me, and threw a terrible burden off my mind.

Then came the thought, could I find or communicate with Kegerly? If he was seeking to hide himself from the consequences of his supposed crime, would he not go where he might not hear that Milton was not dead, or might he not, in his terror and despair, have committed suicide?

I was free, and went back to my office to await events. There I discovered two things—that I had but few friends, and no practice; but I made it my one object in life to find Kegerly. I put advertisements in all the papers, and I knew that, if he should chance to see one, he would come back to London.

Week after week passed, and Milton still lay in that death-like trance. It was a mystery to the profession and to the world. The papers were full of it, and it was the talk of the day. I was in my office one night, feeling discouraged in regard to ever hearing anything from Kegerly, when there came a knock at the door. I called out, "Come in!" and in response to my invitation a tall, dark-complexioned man, wearing a full beard, entered, closing and locking the door behind him.

I sprang to my feet, thinking that some trick was about to be played upon me, when he tore the false whiskers from his face. It was Kegerly. My surprise was great, but no greater than my joy, when I realised what his coming might mean to both of us.

He was greatly changed and fatigued, but he immediately told me the story of his escape. He had fled from the house that night, partially insane, donned the disguise that he now wore, and shipped in a vessel for America. They had encountered heavy storms on the way, and were a month in reaching their destination. He did not hear of the fact that Milton still lived until he had been in America two weeks. He took passage at once for England, and, on arriving in London, had come direct to my office.

"You know why I have come back," said he. "Since I was the one who put Milton in his trance, I am the only man who can bring him out of it, and perhaps I cannot, but I mean to make the attempt. If I fail—well, let the law take its course."

I thought that, as he was very tired, he had better get some rest before he made his supreme effort, for it would require immense mental power; but he said that he felt as though he could do it that night, if ever. He donned his disguise, in order that his appearance might not cause comment, and possibly some interference with our plans, and we proceeded to Milton's house.

When we arrived there, I asked to see the eldest son. To him I explained the matter, and requested him not to tell any other member of the family, as I did not wish to arouse any hopes which might possibly be vain. He admitted us to the room where his father lay, and then left us alone. The supreme moment had arrived. Kegerly stepped over to the bedside, and fixing his eyes on those closed lids of Milton, said in a low tone which showed that all the will-power of the man was thrown into his command, "Awake, awake!" at the same time striking him sharply on the breast. The eyes slowly unclosed, Milton's breath came faster and faster; he moved; he awoke to consciousness; then Kegerly, with a cry of joy, fell in a faint.

There is not much more to tell. Milton got well, and when he first awoke, he asked if we had finished setting his leg, thinking he had been asleep but an hour or so, at the most. He had slept just two months and sixteen days. One peculiar feature of this sleep was that his leg had been healing all the time, and when I removed the bandages and splints it was almost well.

Kegerly was ill for two months with nervous prostration, and upon his recovery he went to Rome, where he still practises law. I hear from him occasionally, and he writes me that never from that time has he been able to exercise any sign of hypnotic power whatever.

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THE SONG, AND THE GIRL WHO SANG IT.

DOWN the street, a few yards from where the old "Anchor Inn" stood, was the tavern presided over by Mother Griffin. The building had always been a tavern. Long years before, when Apple Alley did not figure to any great extent in the metropolitan financial mind, Bacchus claimed the little two-storey place for his own. Gradually the alley passed through various stages of existence, until it finally became a nest of speculators. Money, margins, stocks, bonds, and quotations obtained a foothold in the place, and stayed there, driving out everything else but the tavern.

Mother Griffin succeeded the late priest of the shrine. Nobody seemed to know what her real name was, or where she came from. Nobody cared, for the bull and bear denizens of the alley were usually too much engrossed in the music of their tickers to think of speculating on her past. In winter, Mother Griffin served a fragrant steaming punch; in summer, a delicious, cooling draught, known as "Mother Griffin's Icebergs," went over the bar.

These were her specialities. Far and wide they became famous, to the detriment of business in the neighbouring taverns. One could get toddy at the old lady's not to be beaten, and, when summer came, the "iceberg" was like a breath from the Pole.

So the business flourished and grew apace. Finally, the exigencies of trade, and the accumulation of gold in Mother Griffin's cash-box, drove her to the extremity of securing "help." Help came in the shape of a stalwart lad who had crossed from Dublin under the name of Maurice O'Brien; but who, on his arrival, was promptly supplied with the nickname of "Shamus." After awhile Mother Griffin stopped dabbling in rum, lemons, and ice. First swearing Shamus to secrecy, she imparted to him the recipes for toddy and icebergs.

So Bacchus had his high-priestess and his assistant. The high-priestess superintended the business from the depths of a deck chair in the window corner, while she knitted grey woollen stockings of interminable length, the final fate of which never became known.

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Up at the Hi-diddle-diddlety Music Hall, in the heart of the Metropolis, a woman with the voice of a siren sang topical songs. She was known to fame chiefly as Merrie Maywood. Merrie was the newest thing in this line which the indefatigable manager, Bosker, had yet found. She was "the rage" with the blooded patrons of the Hi-diddle-diddlety Music Hall and "the staff," with its plebeian attendants. She was also tall, golden-haired, handsome in a semi-coarse way. But who could resist her "Drinkety-drink, boys, drink!" or "Mother, God bless you!" The first was a wild gyration of music and dance, dedicated to the great thirsty world. The second was one of the sickly-sentimental ditties which the morbid lower class catch and sing threadbare.

Of course, Merrie's fame had reached to Apple Alley. In an evil moment, Shamus, Mother Griffin's attendant spirit, yielded to temptation, and went to hear "Drinkety-drink." The lightning struck, and Shamus came home "half seas over," with a vision of gleaming gold hair and white arms before his eyes, and the memory of a witching voice in his fuddled Irish head. Oh! if it had ended there—but it didn't.

The next day Shamus whistled "Drinkety-drink, boys!" as he mixed icebergs, and hummed it as he waited for trade. By-and-bye Bosker's advertising man wandered into Apple Alley, and sought to paste up posters in its precincts. Thirst drove him to Mother Griffin's, and Fate made Shamus whistle "Drinkety-drink" as he came in.

Now Bosker's bill-sticker was a man of fine business instinct. "Barman whistles 'Drinkety-drink,'" said he to himself; "seen Merrie—likes her (couldn't help it)—good place for Merrie's mug—can see it all the time then." So he tugged out a poster and broached the matter to Shamus.

The lad hesitated—what would Mother Griffin say? No theatrical posters ever went into that big front window—she said she hated "theayters"—no good comes from 'em; she might kick—but— Here the bustling bill-poster saw Shamus hesitate. In an instant two tickets for the Hall were flashed before the Irishman's eyes.

Shamus bit, like a big Irish gudgeon. When Mother Griffin came in from her marketing, one hour later, Merrie's face smiled out from the bulk upon the hustle and bustle of the Alley, and in Shamus's inside pocket were two free passes to the Hall. Shamus nursed his tickets two days too long. On the second day after Merrie's advent in the Alley, Mother Griffin discovered the poster in the window. She looked at it for a moment, and then became ghastly pale. "Shamus," she called. Shamus was in the cellar bottling up a cask, but he answered at once, "Yes'm."

When he emerged from the depths, Mother Griffin questioned him:

"Who brought that—that picture here?" she demanded.

"A gintleman," responded Shamus, thinking of his free tickets.

"Was he one of the customers?"

"He was that," answered the witness. "He had an iceberg. He ain't a regular, though."

"Whose picture is it?"

"Bedad, the swatest gurrel in the world, mum; she sings 'Drinkety-drink, boys, drink!' up at Bosker's. Have yez heard her, mum?"

Here Shamus launched out into Merrie's praises, feeling that there was a gleam in the eyes of his mistress which required dissimulation on his part. Mother Griffin listened; but her poor old face grew even older-looking and more care-worn as Shamus went on.

"The gintleman gave me two free tickets for the show, mum, just for the honner of stickin' the thing in the windy," said he, as a *finale*, "and I'm going there th' night. Sure, to hear her sing 'Drinkety-drink, boys' is finer than wan of yer own icebergs."

Mother Griffin sat down in her corner, but not a stocking did she knit that day. She just sat and rocked, looking out into Apple Alley with eyes that seemed to be looking years back into the past. Once Shamus saw a tear trickle down her face and drop into her lap.

When the establishment closed for the day, at six p.m., Shamus was asked to disgorge his tickets. The Irish lad looked crestfallen for a moment, as his visions of a night at Bosker's faded away into nothingness. But a bright idea struck him.

"Yez don't want both of 'em?" he asked wistfully. "Me and Paddy Long was goin', but I can make Paddy pay."

Mother Griffin smiled sadly, and said one would do, upon which Shamus departed, thinking he had "shut up the owld lady's eye."

That night any Apple Alleyite, who chanced to be near the stage at Bosker's, might have seen an old lady, all wrapped up in a veil, seated at a table, eagerly watching the different acts. He might also have seen her get up after Merrie's turn, and stagger out of the place as if intoxicated. Inside all was applause and encore: "Drinkety-drink" held high carnival; but outside, where the big arc-lights shed their pitiless dazzle, tottered a broken-hearted old woman, whose soul was hearing a refrain as sad as Merrie's song was joyous. "Oh, if God had only taken little Mary; if He had

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only taken me before she was born." And, still muttering, the old lady shrank from the dawdlers round the entrance, and passed into the darkness beyond. In an hour she found Apple Alley and the tavern.

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When Mother Griffin came downstairs in the morning to see if Shamus had made everything ready for the day's business, she looked as if she had passed a sleepless night. Shamus—always quick to note a change in his mistress—remarked the fact, and was told that "nooralgy" had got in its work between sunset and dawn. But when the big Irishman caught Mother Griffin sobbing to herself over in the little corner where she always sat, he concluded that something beside neuralgia was to blame for those sleepless hours.

What had the old lady to worry about? Nothing, as far as he knew. Business was good; and even if it wasn't, there was a goodly pile of gold in the bank to Mother Griffin's credit. He knew that, for he had seen her bank-book. So, after the first discomforting vision of bankruptcy, the sheriff, and consequent loss of his job, Shamus gave up the idea of business troubles, and sought another cause for his mistress's tears. Towards night she gave him a surprise, equally great as the sight of her in tears.

"Shamus?" asked she, "what have you done with that other ticket for the Hi-diddle-diddlety Theatre that the man gave you?"

Here Shamus did something he had never done before—he told the old lady a lie. Afterwards, when he and Patsy Doolan sat sipping their beer in the Hi-diddle-diddlety, he excused the act to his chum by saying: "Me wages ain't so big, Pat, that Oi can affoord to lose a ticket loike thot. Oi giv' her wan av thim, and she warn't contin't, so Oi towld her Oi loosed it."

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So the summer wore on, and winter came. Merrie Maywood still sang at the Hall.

Down in Apple Alley things had changed a little—icebergs had resigned in favour of hot toddy Shamus was still there, hale and hearty, but Mother Griffin looked as if her days were numbered and her reign at the tavern would soon be at an end.

One day—a dreary, cold December day—when the streets were like glass under the sleet and ice of a fierce north-easter, one of the denizens of Apple Alley sat in his office opening his morning mail; "Handsome Dennison," his fellow brokers called him. The whole alley, even to Mother Griffin, knew him as a man who had plenty of money, made plenty, and spent it proportionately.

There was one letter in Handsome Dennison's pile, however, that was not turned over to the chief clerk to be answered. It was a little tinted thing, not over-beautifully addressed, but still evidently precious to Dennison, as he smuggled it away into his pocket to read at leisure. An hour later, as he went off to the Stock Exchange, Dennison stepped into Mother Griffin's, got a glass of toddy to keep out the cold, and glanced over the note.

"Dear Jimmie," it said, "your confounded advice to a poor woman who needs every penny she can get has just lost me a thousand on Kaffirs. I'm coming down to the office this afternoon, and you must make it good. If you don't, somebody else will."

The note was signed "Merrie," nothing else; but Dennison looked up at the poster of Merrie Maywood, still hanging in the window, and muttered something about "blood-sucker."

Trade at Mother Griffin's was always better between three and four in the afternoon. On the steps of the Exchange, shortly after three o'clock, Dennison and a trio of broker friends stood for a moment, putting their umbrellas up before going down to Mother Griffin's. Dennison started across the street first, just as a hansom came slipping along the icy asphalt, and had to dodge between it and a dray which was on the other side of the hansom.

As he did so, a blonde head and a pair of broad, fur-wrapped shoulders thrust themselves out of the window of the carriage and looked towards him.

A moment later and a shrill cry stopped Dennison's friends, and they wheeled about. The hansom was empty, its driver climbing down from his seat in a hurried, excited way. The big dray on the other side was slipping along the icy street with wheels locked, and behind it, bending over a mass of fur and golden hair, was Dennison. Grimsby caught a glimpse of a stylish hat lying in the sleety mud of the street, and a glint of silk from the figure over which Dennison knelt.

"She's been hurt, Paulson," exclaimed Grimsby, darting back to the spot. Paulson followed, reaching them in time to help lift and carry the limp, nerveless form to the pavement.

"It's Merrie," gasped Paulson, who was evidently in a shaky state, and could only stare at the dirty, bedraggled garments of the woman.

"Yes, it's Merrie. Don't stand there that way. We are going to carry her to Mother Griffin's. Tell the ambulance to come there."

Paulson hustled off, breaking through the gathering crowd, while Grimsby and Dennison, with the driver, lifted the body, and began to carry it tenderly towards the little tavern. A street arab ran ahead and opened the door, only to be followed by the crowd.

Dennison, his face white and set, entered first, supporting in his arms the head and shoulders of his burden. Down on the floor they laid her, Shamus coming out from behind the bar, excited, nervous and useless.

Dennison still kept close to the injured woman; but now, when the head, with its wreath of golden hair, lay on the sanded floor, his nerve gave way. If he had ever quarrelled with her for her faithlessness to him he forgot it; if he had shuddered at her reckless nature, he also forgot that; if he had sometimes, even with his love, loathed the ignorant, untrained nature under the superficial exterior, he lost all knowledge of it. Only the closed eyes, and blue, pain-drawn lips, and the pallor of approaching death, appealed to him now.

"Merrie, Merrie," he whispered hoarsely, "it's Jim Don't you know me. Are you hurt very much?"

But there was no answer, and Dennison's face began to show signs of a fear which had not before suggested itself.

"Merrie," went on Dennison, "Merrie! Why doesn't that ambulance come? Are they going to let my Merrie die here like this?"

Suddenly the door of the back room, Mother Griffin's particular haunt, opened, and the old lady stood in the doorway. her eyes taking in the scene of half-a-dozen men kneeling by a prostrate woman, and her ears catching the words: "Are they going to let my Merrie die like this?"

Sometimes the truth strikes us mortals like a lightning-flash—there is an instant's illumination of the mind, and we have the whole story.

The next instant Dennison saw another face beside Merrie's, and another figure kneeling like himself, and, strangest of all, Mother Griffin's eyes peering at Merrie's closed ones, and Mother Griffin's voice softly calling "daughter" into Merrie's ear.

Suddenly there was a rattle of wheels outside, followed by the appearance of Paulson, and a tall, whiskered young man in blue. The young man pushed Dennison aside, and he, too, knelt by Merrie. Grimsby told him that she had been run over, "right across the body"—the young surgeon took no heed.

"You had better get the crowd out and notify the police. I can't do anything. She'll be dead in ten minutes," was all he said.

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Dennison's office is still down in Apple Alley, and Dennison still inhabits it, but with the air of a man who is trying to outdrink and outlive his memory. There is still a saloon at the old stand, but Mother Griffin doesn't run it, although icebergs and toddy are still the specialities. Shamus, whose patronymic—O'Brien—hangs over the door, has been to the "Hi-diddle-diddlety," time and time again, since he had the business given to him; but he has not forgotten a woman who once sang "Drinkety-drink, boys," to the tune of a thousand applauding beer-glasses. There has been no other like her.

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THE OUTLAWS' TREASURE

SUMMARY.

The mail train has been robbed between Cornwall and La Grange stations, and £20,000 worth of gold stolen by a gang of desperadoes, headed by two brothers named Mulligan. Two passengers on the train—Adolph Squirrek, *alias* Smith, a detective tracking the Mulligans, and Fred Weldon, a young lawyer—who have struck up an acquaintance on the way, alight at Somerville, where the former stopped at the "Drover," and the latter at his mother's house. During the night a message comes to say that Judge Woodland's horse has come back alone, and Weldon, together with Squirrek and two other men set out to find him, and discover one of Mulligan's confederates lying senseless on the road. The man, who had made an unsuccessful attempt on the life of the judge, is sentenced to forty years' imprisonment. At Judge Woodland's Weldon meets a Spaniard named Alvarido Almanaz, and the two men become rivals for the love of Florence, the judge's daughter.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SHADOW AND THE VISION.

(From the Journal of Frederick Weldon.)

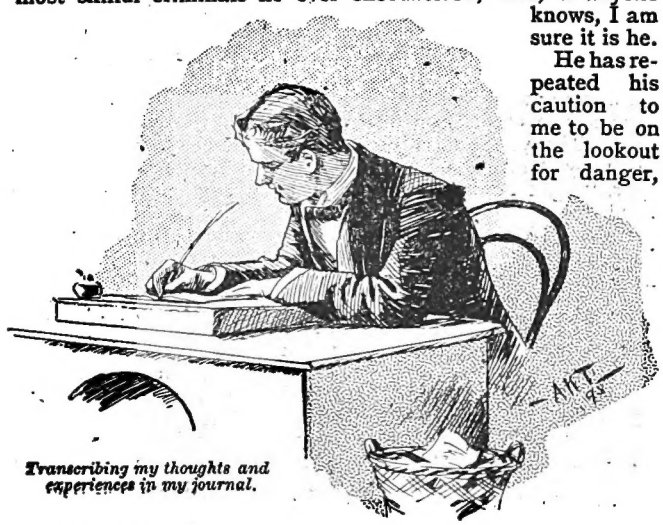
THURSDAY, October 19th.—Here I am again in my office, which I left a week ago on a visit to my home in Somerville. Into this one brief week there have been more events crowded than in any year of my life, and as I sit here, late in the evening, transcribing my thoughts and experiences in my journal, I find myself at a loss where to begin and what to say.

I am here by the commands of Adolph Squirrek, whom the longer I study the more I respect.

"Poor Tom Borie," as he was pathetically termed by his pal, is now safely lodged in the prison at Clayton, and has already served two days of the forty years' confinement which lie before him. I had the pleasure of acting as one of the guards, and we never caught a glimpse of the distinguished Mulligan brothers, although they could not but have known what was going on.

It cannot be that they have made up their minds to be law-abiding citizens, and to give up their nefarious practices. Squirrek tells me they have men among them who are the most skilful criminals he ever encountered, and, if anyone knows, I am sure it is he.

He has repeated his caution to me to be on the lookout for danger,



Transcribing my thoughts and experiences in my journal.

and I am as wide awake as a man can well be, but I haven't been disturbed yet, although a suspicious circumstance occurred last night, when I got out of the train. When I was walking from the station to Mrs. Spriggins', my good landlady's, I became sensible of some man following me.

It makes a fellow feel anything but comfortable to become conscious, on a dark night, that there is someone treading softly behind him, very likely searching for some place in his back where he can drive his stiletto or bowie, and I did some rather "tall-walking"; but the stranger, who had on a pair of squeaking boots, maintained his distance, and the only escape left for me was to break into a run, and, as it was by no means certain that I could outrun him, I gave heed to my pride, and kept up a brisk walk, which would have looked very natural on such a cool evening.

I had come up the walk, and thrust my key in the door, when I heard the squeak of a pair of boots, and, turning my head, was just in time to catch a passing sight of a tall form, walking very rapidly, by the gate. I could not gain the slightest view of the face, nor even of the particular character of the dress. The night was quite dark, and the man, whoever he was, looked very much like the shadow of a man as it is seen to whisk along the side of a house when passing a street-lamp.

An interesting question presents itself at this point, as to the identity of the individual who has taken such an interest in my welfare. Squirrek would doubtless set him down as one of the gang, who is following me with a fell purpose, and if Squirrek said so he would be right.

I am certain only of one thing, and that is, the gentleman who just now is occupying my thoughts is certainly over six feet in height. Hold—I have another point—he wears squeaking boots.

Item. Henceforth tall men in squeaking boots are to be viewed with suspicion.

SATURDAY EVENING.—For the first time since taking up the honoured profession of law I have my hands full of business, although it cannot be said to be strictly of a legal character.

To-day I received a letter from Squirrek—a brief note, saying that the shadows which had been flitting so tantalisingly before him are beginning to take the shape of realities, and he has already secured several interesting threads in the tangled web that he is endeavouring to unravel.

Nothing very definite in that, truly; but on the whole it is encouraging. Squirrek is a man of business, and he seems to have got fairly to work. He has taken me into his confidence, which doesn't mean a great deal at present. I know nothing of his plans, nor which particular trail he is following just now. He isn't apt to be over confidential, and I have to wait until he chooses to explain what he is doing.

He instructs me to watch every visible straw, and to do my utmost in a cautious way to find out who are implicated in the wholesale criminalities of the Mulligan business. It is pretty evident that Squirrek is going into this thoroughly, and with the resolve to make a complete job of it. He is very cautious in his utterances, especially when he has a pen in hand; but I think I can detect in the studied brevity of his epistle the

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exultation of a man who has made an important discovery. He asks me for any item of news, and I don't see what I have to give him.

One or two things have occurred since I last had my journal in hand, which, perhaps, might interest Squirrek, although I can't see anything particularly remarkable in them.

Upon calling at the post-office this afternoon, I learnt that some gentleman had been there before me, and taken out a missive addressed to me, saying that he had been requested to call, and I was too much occupied with my law business! He must have been a malicious wag, and the pursy post-master a veritable Mrs. Partington.

I became sensible of some one following me.

But who was he? This is the question I have been continually asking myself, and am still unable to give a satisfactory response. The most that I can learn is that he was rather a tall man, which makes it possible that he may have my shadow; but whether he wears squeaking boots or not is a question which cannot be solved until he is seen again, or our post-master acquires more observing habits.

After all, it may have been a mere joke played upon me by some friend, and the only thing that troubles me is as to whom this letter was from. It cannot be from my mother, as she invariably answers my letters on Sunday, and if there were anything serious at home she would have telegraphed.

It must have been a second note from Squirrek, and if it has fallen into my shadow's hands, it may play the very mischief with the plans of that detective. That is the great thing to be feared. If it doesn't turn up by Monday I shall feel decidedly uneasy about it.

The second point that occurs to me is regarding the same shadow, which begins to make me feel like a haunted man. There is scarcely a walk that I take after dark but I do not see evidence that I am watched, and yet, when I undertake to turn the tables, and follow the ghostly personage, it flits out of sight like a veritable creation of the fancy.

I have more than once been tempted to send a few shots of my revolver after it, but the possibility of killing a man who has done me no personal harm deters me, and I can hardly bring myself to a point to take the risk. All that remains is for me to continue, or, rather, to increase my vigilance, and I stand a chance of tripping my shadow yet.

The third circumstance is the one that gave me the greatest surprise. In walking down the single street which Brampton can boast, I encountered Señor Almanaz, the Cuban, who made himself such a lion the other evening at Judge Woodland's—that is, in the opinion of the ladies.

The brilliant exquisite was dressed in his most elaborate style, and is truly a gorgeous personage. He looked keenly at me, as though he had forgotten my face, and then made a most polite bow, smiling so broadly that his white teeth gleamed like a wild animal's through his black moustache.

Perhaps it was rude in me to give him a short, businesslike nod, but I feared he was going to stop and speak to me, a catastrophe which I would have done anything to avoid. The young gentleman who is transcribing these lines in his journal has no special desire to cultivate the acquaintance of the distinguished Cuban.

In the meantime, nothing new is heard of the Mulligan gang. No new robberies, no new murders, no other trains thrown off the line.

There has been an additional reward of £1,000 offered for the extirpation of this gang, so that if Squirrek and myself really accomplish it there is quite a handsome sum awaiting us.

I don't see how I am to earn one half of it for thus far the work has been done entirely by him, while I have been simply an onlooker. My turn may come by-and-by.

CHAPTER X.

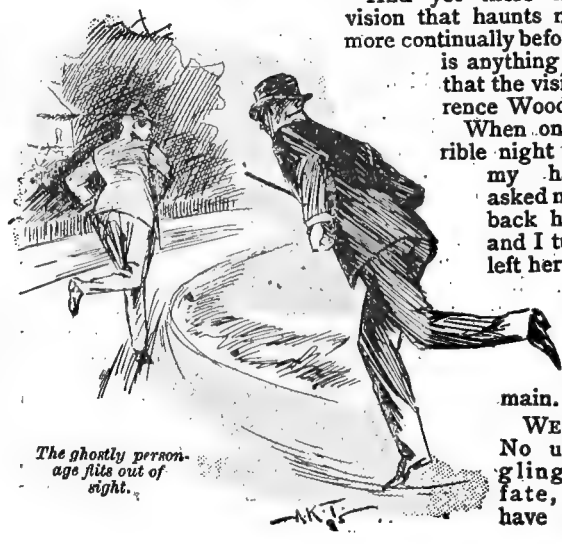
WELDON HAS AN APPOINTMENT.

SUNDAY.—As these pages are intended for no eye but mine, there is no longer any need of attempting to keep the secret from myself.

Surely there is enough to occupy my mind. Another note from Squirrek assures me that matters are progressing better than he had anticipated. I have learned that the intercepted note was simply a business letter of no importance. He is confident of a successful result. My shadow still haunts me, and I know that I am a marked man, that there are men seeking the opportunity to take my life, and that I can only escape by the kindness of heaven and my own vigilance.

And yet there is another vision that haunts me, that is more continually before me than is anything else, and that the vision of Florence Woodland.

When on that terrible night she took my hand and asked me to bring back her father, and I turned and left her, I left my heart with her, and there it will ever remain.


The ghostly personage flits out of sight.

WEDNESDAY. No use struggling against fate, and I have given up

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I encountered Señor Almanaz, the Cuban.

struggling against it. Unless peremptory orders come from Squirrek within a week, I shall go back to Somerville, seek her out, and ask her whether I may be allowed to hope—whether in the firmament one single star, faint though it be, shall shine for me.

I know I shall make myself ridiculous, but the suspense is becoming too great to bear. If nothing occurs of a startling nature between this day week, I take the express to Somerville, and then——.

A WEEK LATER.—It has come at last. A letter from Squirrek, and it shows that he has sanded the decks, preparatory for action:

"DEAR WILSON,—You remember the High Bridge across the stream they call the Devil's Creek, a short distance beyond the point where our Mulligan friends saved the United States the trouble of transporting the mails any further? Well, you are to take the seven o'clock train to-morrow and get off at Cornwall, or the nearest station, and walk out to this bridge, where you will find me and a friend waiting for you. Come without fail; if anything should occur to prevent, telegraph me. SQUIRREK."

This was the letter which reached me this evening, by the last post.

Fortunately my legal business is not so pressing as to confine me to the house continually. I can afford to take a holiday of a day or two at least.

I find myself in quite a pleasurable excitement over the prospect of the stirring scenes before me and disposed to treat the matter of my shadow quite lightly.

He hasn't forgotten me entirely. This evening I heard the squeak of his boots, and feeling as though it was about time I got my hand into the detective business, I turned about and gave him chase. I got near enough to see his horizontal coat-tails, but he proved that his fleeting was greater than mine, and he speedily gave me the slip.

This shadow has come nearer running against a bullet than he, or, rather, I imagines. I have held my revolver in hand more than once, but something has restrained me.

I have come to the conclusion that the shadow is the visible form of one of my enemies, who is going to strike, but is not yet prepared to do so.

What brings my noble friend Señor Alvado Almanaz so often to this part of the world? This afternoon I encountered him again, gotten up in the same gorgeous and overwhelming manner. He didn't observe me, but I followed him with my eyes until he disappeared out of sight round the corner.

I have a suspicion of that man. I believe he and Squirrek are acquainted. I fancied they exchanged looks at Judge Woodland's the other evening, which meant something, although I did not see them address each other.

I am growing into the conviction that the señor is mixed up in this Mulligan business in some way or other, and, if in any way at all, it must be as a secret detective, who is watching me.

I am not pleased at the thought. Squirrek is a man that I respect, as I do any expert in his profession, and there is a certain feeling, not exactly awe, which comes over you when he turns those cold steel-grey eyes of his upon you, and makes you feel that you are standing in the presence of a man who can read your inmost secrets.

The confidence he has shown in me has inspired a reciprocal emotion, and I already begin to look upon him as my friend.

And this makes it disagreeable to associate the Cuban with him. I loathe the sight of that man, and I know the feeling would have been the same whether he had come between me and Florence Woodland or not.

I must manage to give the shadow the slip to-morrow, for I don't wish him to follow me to the High Bridge. If I discover Señor Almanaz in the train, I shall be well satisfied that he is following the same trail as Squirrek, and that the two will unite right speedily.

What means this business at night near the Devil's Creek? It is rather a lonely part of the country for a man to venture without company.

Why doesn't Squirrek make a flying visit to Brampton, and call at my office? Somebody would see him enter, and he would be set down as one of my clients, and we could arrange matters more comfortably in this room than near a high railway bridge at night.

Such a proceeding as his calling upon me might create suspicion. But he understands the art of disguising himself so thoroughly, that no one could suspect his identity unless it might be the——

Shadow! Has he a suspicion of that being who follows me so continually, and that might penetrate his own disguise?

I may set it down as a surety, that if Adolph Squirrek sends for me, it is to my interest to go. So I start to-morrow, and on my way to the depôt I will send him a telegram, that there may be no mistake.

Whatever the danger, there is the thought that I will be so many miles nearer to Somerville, and so many nearer her, whose name my pen shall not write.

(End of the Journal.)

Telegram from Frederick Weldon to Adolph Squirrek:—

"Am about to start to meet you as requested at the rendezvous this evening.—F. W."

The reply, which reached Brampton ten minutes too late:—

"Don't go; it is a trap for your destruction.—A. S."

CHAPTER XI.

THE REV. J. SKIGGS STARTS IN PURSUIT.

(*From the Journal of Adolph Squirrek, Detective.*)

I LAY it down as an infallible rule that the man who is liable to fall in love will never do for the noble profession of a detective. There are channels in the Orkney Islands where if the pilot turns a hand's-breadth to the right or left he goes to destruction.

The life of the detective is one of those Orkney channels, and if he halts a second to look at a pretty face or figure down he goes. The detective, above all things, must keep his head level.

My young friend Frederick Weldon never would make a detective. He is lacking in several essential qualities, too obvious to be mentioned in detail.

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In looking over his journal I find he has quite a facility in the expression of his thoughts, and if it were not for his twaddle about the shadow, and the vision of Judge Woodland's daughter, it would make passable reading.

I was just beginning to get my work in hand when a telegram from Fred Weldon informed me that he was on the eve of starting for the place appointed for our meeting. The instant that dispatch was placed in my hands, I understood what it meant, and sent my reply, which I learnt reached here a few minutes too late to intercept him.

Being certain that there was mischief in the wind, I took the midnight train for Brampton, and owing to its being several hours behind time, I reached this antiquated town just as day was breaking.

At the hotel my name is recorded as Rev. J. Skiggs, from Chicago. My appearance is ministerial, and if the shadow is hovering round this office, I have no objection to his discovering all that he chooses regarding me and my errand in this quiet place.

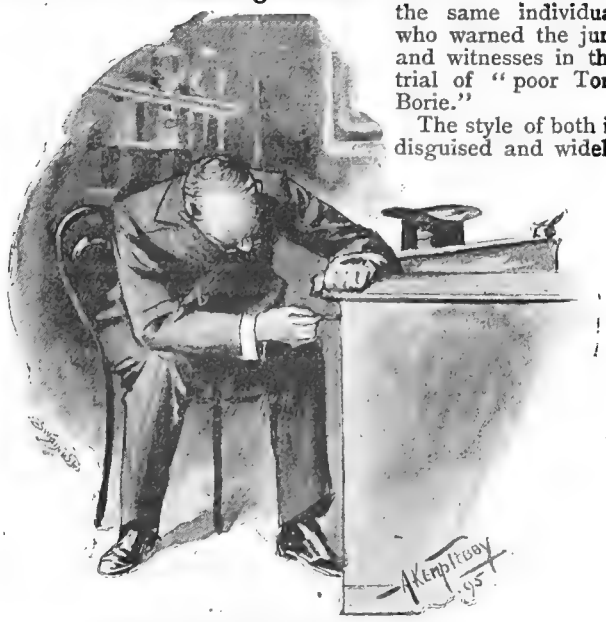
As a matter of course, I expected to find the lawyer's office locked, and so I came provided with the keys to let me in; and, getting in, it was very natural that the secretaire should be found in the same condition as the door. None of my keys would fit this lock, and so I was compelled to resort to the undignified proceeding of picking the lock for myself.

This was done, and upon opening the desk I found an inkstand, a gross of Gillot's pens, a few quires of paper, several sheets of which were covered over with the name of Florence Woodland, written in every sort of hand, but with the manifest purpose of doing it as well as possible, while in one place I observe the name of Frederick Weldon is in immediate juxtaposition to it, and both are surrounded by a net-work of flourishes, exceedingly suggestive of Cupid and that sort of thing.

Tucked off in one corner was Weldon's private journal, whereupon I locked the door, lit my cigar, and sat down in his chair, and have very leisurely read it through.

He shows an undue sensitiveness as to my detecting his secret, when I learnt it all on that evening we spent together at Judge Woodland's. With that, however, I have nothing to do at present, as there is a more important matter to occupy my attention, and that is the personal safety of Frederick Weldon himself.

Lying between the leaves of his journal was the note which has my name forged at the bottom of it. Something in the penmanship struck me as familiar, and a little closer examination revealed the interesting fact that this note was written by the same individual who warned the jury and witnesses in the trial of "poor Tom Borie."



The undignified proceeding of picking the lock.

The style of both is disguised and widely different, but there are earmarks which unmistakably show that one hand penned them all.

It is a bad looking place.

For the present the Mulligan Brothers must be left to themselves, as their case will bear a little postponement, while there is no time to be lost in looking after the welfare of my young friend.

It is plain that Weldon has implicitly followed the direction of the note, and gone to the High Bridge. Then one of three things has followed: he has been set upon and killed; he has been entrapped, and is now a prisoner; or he has gained a suspicion of his danger in time to make his escape.

Were he not in love, there would be some hope of the latter; but as it is, I shall hold no faith in it until the proof is before my eyes. If the first, or even the second contingency is the true one, it is pretty certain that some evidence has been left behind that will serve as an indication. Consequently my first duty is to go to Cornwall.

CHAPTER XII.

THE REV. GENTLEMAN LOSES HIS SERMONS.

CORNWALL, EVENING.—Carefully locking Weldon's journal in his desk I fastened the door of his office, and half an hour later stepped out of the train in this dingy little village. Upon inquiry I learnt that the High Bridge is four miles distant, and I started at once for it, walking with a heavy staff, and a very ministerial air, as though I were a shepherd in search of some wanderers from my flock.

I made no further inquiries, as it is important that no suspicions should be awakened at this point, and it isn't possible that I could have gained any information of benefit.

After a weary tramp, I entered the woods, and finally reached the railroad bridge over Devil's Creek. It is a bad-looking place, the rails being fully a hundred feet above the dark, narrow, sluggish stream flowing below, while there are silent, sombre woods on every hand. If the railway authorities should neglect this structure, what an opportunity for a great accident!

After reaching the bridge, my first proceeding was sharply to scrutinise every point that came within my range of observation, to make sure whether any one was watching me. I saw no signs of any one and began my work.

I first walked very carefully over the trestle work, and came within an ace of being run over, for just as I was on the centre I heard the rumble of the approaching train, and had barely

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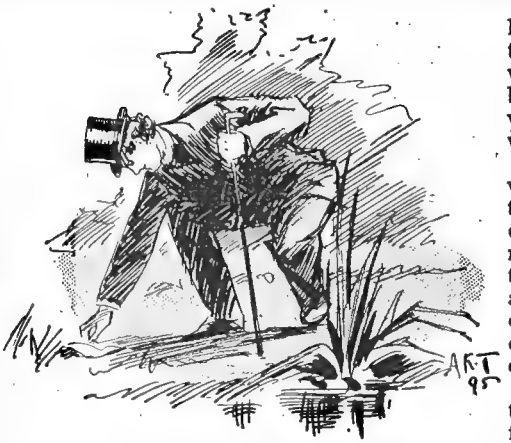
time to get out of the way when it thundered out of the woods, and was gone almost on the instant.

I returned, twice walked the entire length of the bridge, but without discovering the slightest trace of anything of a suspicious nature, in which I was not disappointed; for it is not to be supposed that a man would venture out upon a dangerous railway bridge to meet a friend, although it seems to me that there is hardly anything too ridiculous for a man in love to do.



It lay just on the edge of the water.

It is still more unlikely that he would have crossed the bridge to the other side, and, as a natural consequence, whatever occurred of a tragic nature in my friend's history, must have taken place on the side of the stream which was first reached.

To this I therefore confined my observation, and for several hundred yards back and forth I walked, with my eyes fixed upon the rails and ties, but still without attaining any definite result. The hard gravel between the timber is not very susceptible to the impression of a foot, but no violent struggle could have taken place here without leaving some trace, which I am sure I would have detected.

My next point was under the bridge, and as I turned my steps in that direction, a shudder came over me. When a man is approaching alone a dismal place where there is reason to believe a recent murder has been committed, and where there is an equally strong probability that the murderers have their eyes upon him, he is apt to feel somewhat squeamish, and to carefully look at every step he takes, ready at any moment to draw back to the cheerful sunlight he is leaving behind him.

An atom of success rewarded my search under the bridge. The stream at this point, I should remark, is less than ten feet in width, and a man could easily ford it without wetting his knees. The water is very clear, but with a black, clayey bottom, which at the first appearance gives you the impression that you are looking upon a stream of ink; but the clear glimmer of a white pebble here and there shows you your error, and proves that the water is remarkably pellucid.

It would be a physical impossibility for the body of a dog to be hid in this portion of the Devil's Creek; and as I stood on the bank, carefully scrutinising the inky bottom, the conviction became stronger and stronger each moment that Frederick Weldon had not been murdered here.

I was on the point of starting down stream, when I caught sight of a bit of paper on the bank, and at the same moment saw there was writing upon it. It lay just on the edge of the water, and was quickly in my hand.

I was somewhat disappointed when it proved to be part of a printed blank, such as lawyers use. There was visible on it the printed word, "presents," while below there could be seen in script the words, "of sale."

These proved that the bit of paper had been torn from a "bill of sale," the printed word being the last of the well-known phrase, "Know all men by these presents," while below the words "of sale" had been written with the pen.

The fact that this is written with violet ink, which just now is beginning to become popular—that, although dashed off hastily, it shows a beautiful round hand, makes me suspect (nothing more) that the paper, no longer ago than yesterday, was in the hands of Frederick Weldon, but whether dropped from the bridge above or not can only be conjectured.

Hoping that there might be something more than this, I turned to move further down the stream, when a footstep arrested me, and I found myself suddenly face to face with one of the Mulligan gang.

The man was dressed in the garb of a simple farmer, and was covered with dust and dirt, as though he had just come from the plough, while there was a simple, half-idiotic look in his face and an ordinary garden-hoe balanced over shoulder. I would have been an ass had I failed to detect his disguise on the instant.

"Hullo, stranger! ain't you lost?"

"Hullo, stranger! ain't you lost?" he asked with the peculiar accent of the illiterate Western farmer.

"I almost fear so," I replied with as bland a smile as I could put on. "I am sorry I had to make this tramp, for it is harder work than I have been accustomed to."

"What made you do it then?"

"I couldn't very well avoid it. You see, when I engaged to preach in Cornwall last Sabbath, I sent a package containing several of my sermons by train. The messenger is a young friend of mine, and he gladly took charge of them, without charging me anything for his services. But when he reached Cornwall he amazed me by informing me that they were lost. He said that when they reached the High Bridge—as I believe they call this place—the engine gave a whistle of danger, and he hastily stepped out upon the platform to see what it meant—holding my package in one hand.

"As he did so, the conductor followed him, striking his elbow, and the same instant my sermons went spinning down in the darkness. As soon as I discovered my loss, I started out here on foot after them, and I'll give any man a sovereign who will find them. Do you feel able to help me?"

(To be continued.)

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THE BLACK CROSS.

I MADE his acquaintance during an altercation he was having with a Neapolitan cab-driver. The "Signor," it would seem, had "seven times tried to mangle him" during a sevenpenny ride across the city, and on the eighth attempt had apparently accomplished his design.

When a free and enlightened American citizen who has spent the best years of his life roughing it on the prairies and a child of sunny Italy, of the Neapolitan cabdriving persuasion, come to loggerheads, the atmosphere round the parish in which they are disputing is apt to become a trifle sultry. Certainly it did on this occasion.

I was some use, I think, in smoothing Mr. Plummer's plumage, and from that moment we were fast friends. Indeed we went up Vesuvius together the next day. It was whilst in the train going to Pompeii that he told me the following incident, but for the sake of brevity, I have omitted the conversation that led up to it:

"A black cross had been set against Judge Hawkins's name. Why, it is not for me to say. We were not accustomed to explain our motives or to give reasons for our deeds. The deeds were enough, and this black cross meant death; and when it had been shown us, all that we needed to know further was at what hour we should meet for the contemplated raid.

"A word from the captain settled that, and when the next Friday came a dozen men met at the place of rendezvous ready for the ride which should bring them to the Judge's solitary mansion across the mountains. I was among them, and in as satisfactory a mood as I had ever been in my life, for the night was favourable and the men hearty and in first-rate condition.

"The house towards which we were riding was built on a hillside, and the first thing we saw on emerging from the forest was a light burning in one of its distant windows. This was a surprise, for the hour was late, and in that part of the country people were accustomed to retire early, even such busy men as the Judge. He must have a visitor, and a visitor meant a possible complication of affairs; so a halt was called, and I was singled out to reconnoitre the premises.

"The house, which had now become plainly visible, was a solid one of stone, built, as I have said, on the hillside. It faced the road, as was shown by the large portico dimly to be discerned in that direction, but its rooms were mainly on the side, and it was from one of these that the light shone.

"As I came yet nearer I perceived that these rooms were guarded by a piazza, which, communicating with a portico in front, afforded an open road to that window and a clear sight of what lay behind it. I was instantly off my horse and upon the piazza, and before I had time to realise that my fears had returned to me with double force, I crept stealthily towards that uncurtained window and looked in.

"What did I see? At first nothing but a calm, studious figure bending above a batch of closely-written papers, upon which the light shone too brightly for me to perceive much of what lay behind them. But gradually an influence, of whose workings I was scarcely conscious, drew my eyes away, and I began to discover on every side strange and beautiful objects which greatly interested me, until suddenly my eyes fell upon a vision of loveliness so enchanting that I forgot to look elsewhere and became for the moment nothing but sight and feeling.

"It was a picture, or so I thought in the first instant of awe and delight. But presently I saw that it was a woman, living, and full of the thoughts that had never been mine; and at the discovery a sudden trembling seized me, for I had never seen anything like her beauty, while she saw nothing but the man who was bending over his papers.

"But it was her face that held me, and made of me from moment to moment a new man. For in it I discerned what I had never believed in till now—devotion that had no limit, and love which asked nothing in return. She seemed to be faltering on the threshold of that room as one who would like to enter but does not dare, and in another moment, with a smile that pierced me through, she turned as if to go.

"Instantly I forgot everything but my despair, and leant forward with an impetuosity that betrayed my presence. She glanced quickly towards the window, and, seeing me, turned pale, even while she rose in height till I felt myself shrink and grow small before her.

"Thrusting out her hand, she caught from the table before her what looked like a small dagger, and holding it up advanced upon me with blazing eyes and parted lips, not seeing that the Judge had risen to his feet, not seeing anything but my face glued against the pane, and staring with an expression that must have struck to the heart as surely as her look pierced mine. When she was almost upon me I turned and fled.

"How soon I met my mates I cannot say. In a few minutes, doubtless, for they had stolen after me and had detected me running away from the window. I was forced to tell my tale, and I told it unhesitatingly, for I knew I could not save him—if I wanted to—and I asked that she be spared not only from sharing his fate, but from the sight of his death, for she loved him.

"This from me! No wonder the captain stared, then laughed. But I did not laugh in return, and, being the strongest man in the band, and the surest with my rifle, he did not trifle long, but listened to my plans, and, in part, consented to them, so that I retreated to my post at the gateway with something like confidence, while he, approaching the door, lifted the knocker, and let it fall with a resounding clang that must have rung like a knell of death to the hearts within.

"For the judge knew our errand. I saw it in his face when he rose to his feet; and he had no hope, for we had never failed in our attempts, and the house though strongly built, was easily assailable.

"While the captain knocked, three men had scaled the portico and were ready to enter the open windows if the judge refused to parley, or offered any resistance to what was known as the captain's will.

"'Death to the judge!' was the cry, and it was echoed not only at the door but round the house, where the rest of the men had drawn a cordon ready to waylay any one who sought to escape. Death to the judge! And the judge was loved by that woman and would be warned by her still. But a voice is speaking, a voice from out that great house, and it asks what is wanted and what the meaning is of these threats of death.

"And the captain answers short and sharp:

"'The regulator commands, but he never explains. What he commands now is for Judge Hawkins to come forth. If he shrinks or delays, his house will be entered and burnt, but if he will come out and meet like a man what awaits him, his house shall go free and his family remain unmolested.'

"'And what is it that awaits him?' pursued the voice.

"'Four bullets,' returned the captain.

"'It is well; he will come forth,' cried the voice, and then in a huskier tone; 'Let me kiss the woman I love. I will not keep you long.'

"And the captain answered nothing, only counted out clearly and steadily 'One—two—three,' up to a hundred; then he paused, turned and lifted his hand; when instantly our four rifles rose, and at the same moment the door, with a faint grating sound I shall never forget, slowly opened, and the firm, unshrinking figure of the Judge appeared.

"We did not delay. One simultaneous burst of fire, one quick crack, and his figure fell before our eyes. A sound, a cry from within, then all was still, and the captain, mounting his horse, gave one quick whistle, and galloped away. We followed him, but I was the last to mount, and did not follow long, for at the flash of those guns I had seen a smile cross our victim's lip, and my heart was on fire. I could not rest till I had found my way back to that open doorway and the figure lying within it.

"There it was, and behind it a house empty as my heart has been since that day. A man's dress covering a woman's form—and over the motionless, perfect features that same smile which I had seen in the room beyond, and again in the quick glare of the rifles."

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A SHEEP IN WOLF'S CLOTHES

MR. AMORY CABOT GORDON had been everywhere, knew everybody, and had done everything. He was an "American citizen," and therefore beyond the contagion of foreign influences.

It was in the full consciousness of this fact that Gordon promenaded the broad deck of the Cunarder *Lucania*, bound New Yorkward, looking about the motley crowd to discover whom there was on board worth speaking to, or, even, worth speaking of. For the most part Gordon's journeys across the Atlantic had been made in the solemn silence of social exclusiveness. He always read over the passenger list while sipping his coffee on the first morning out, and occasionally he came across a name he knew.

But upon this particular voyage the ship carried no one of whom he had ever heard before. At dinner, for two days, he talked to the captain, at whose side he sat, but outside of such infrequent discourse his communications were limited to the matutinal colloquialisms and unwarranted greetings of absolute strangers. Gordon never could understand why he should be expected to talk to somebody he had never before seen, simply because they both were, unfortunately, fifteen hundred miles from land.

It rained the third day out. There had been awnings to leeward during the afternoon, which had made the deck endurable, but later these had been reefed, and everything was in a spongy condition. The smoking-room was full of Jews, squabbling over cards, and was certainly a place to be avoided; but, as there was no other refuge in which to indulge in a post-prandial cigar, Gordon entered reluctantly.

As he went in he cast his most scrutinising glance through the murky atmosphere; physiognomies of all countries and conditions met his gaze, and in a distant corner he discovered a vacant seat next an Englishman. The man was smoking a briar pipe, and wore rough grey tweeds and huge boots that could only be dignified as "clod-hoppers."

Five minutes passed with the monotonous puff-puff of pipe and cigar, and then the Englishman, with that sort of bold shyness which is a national characteristic, turned more directly towards Gordon and inquired whether he was an American.

"I am a Bostonian," said Gordon.

"Oh!" said the Englishman, "I—er—thought you were—different."

"Different from what?" asked Gordon.

"Different to the—er—others," he replied with a gesture that included the occupants of the smoking-room.

Gordon shuddered. "Foreigners will never realise our class distinctions," he began, rather stiffly. "As a matter of fact, our lines are as rigid as—as yours. Of course, we have no royalty and no nobility, but our old families occupy much the same position."

"How interesting," said the Britisher, resuming his pipe. "Were you much in England?"

"I go to London every season—just run over for a little shopping, go to a ball or two, and do a few theatres," said Gordon.

"What a bore that must be," declared the other slowly. "I hate good old London. I live in the North."

Gordon saw visions of Liverpool manufacturers and Yorkshire tradesmen.

It transpired that the Englishman's name was Loame. He pointed it out to Gordon on the passenger list—T. Loame, Esq. It was not the sort of name that evoked vistas of ancestral grandeur; nevertheless, there was something in the man's manner that inspired the Bostonian with the feeling that he had not made a mistake, and on the following morning, when the two men met, he greeted him with a not uncordial nod.

Loame was of the type which is called "big." He was over six feet high and turned fourteen stone; but his solidity was all bone and muscle, and there was not a superfluous ounce of flesh on his stalwart frame. Gordon could not help admiring the fine animal type which was in such contrast to his own blue-blooded refinement.

Gradually the two men drifted into conversation again, and Gordon discovered that his chance acquaintance had travelled widely and was well read.

By the end of the voyage the acquaintance of the two men had assumed a mild semblance of friendship. And it was not without some sensations of regret that, as the Liberty of Bartholdi loomed in sight one bright November day, they realised that they must part.

"Well," said Gordon as he held out his hand, "I hope we may meet again some day."

"Oh, thanks!" replied Loame.

"And if you—come—to Boston," added the Bostonian, hesitatingly, "I shall—be glad—to—see—you."

"Oh, thanks!" replied the Englishman again.

"I should like to show you some civility, in a quiet way, you know," Gordon went on, slowly. "Of course, I couldn't do much, you understand. My people's set is very—well, er—exclusive, I might say. We don't care much for strangers—without proper introductions."

"I see!" said Loame.

"Have you brought any letters?" probed Gordon, who liked the man, and would have allowed himself some enthusiasm in his behalf if he had been sure of his perfect eligibility. He racked his brainr for any connection possible between "Loame" and the peerage. The name conveyed nothing to him but misty visions of sooty cities in midland counties.

"Letters?" repeated the Englishman. "Yes; I have a few, but I shall not deliver them. I never do. I don't believe in credentials. There's many a good horse without pedigree. I carried letters about once—when I was too young to know better. I was a sort of amateur postman in those days, and after I delivered them I was bored to death. There are two sorts of kindness in the world—that which asks you to dinner, and that which doesn't. I prefer the latter."

"Of course, we feel differently on those subjects," said Gordon. "Anyway," he added, "let me know when you reach Boston. Every Englishman likes a club, and I'll put you up at the tavern. It isn't the 'Somerset,' you know: but you can get a grilled bone there, and have a comfortable smoke."

Then, with another handshake, they parted. Loame went in search of his portmanteau and gun cases, while Gordon left his man-servant in charge of his numerous articles—hat-boxes, shirt-cases, and trunks.

II.

Boston was very gay that year—gay, at least, for Boston. Several débutantes had been sacrificed upon the High Altar of Fashion at "Teas" given in their honour. Mrs. Pushing was a very great lady, even among such people as the Baylees, and the Brayers, and the Trimmers, who never condescended to know anybody whose grandfathers and grandmothers their own grandfathers and grandmothers had not known.

Poor Mrs. Pushing! She was, no doubt, easily queen, but she realised that her throne was in danger. She already had invitations out for a big crush on the following Wednesday night, but there was no lion to roar. Of course she had

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captured a dozen tame celebrities, but everybody had heard their little plaintive social whines.

She met Amory Gordon one day, and buttonholed him at once. "What shall I do?" she exclaimed with her most fetching accent. And then she explained the situation.

Later, Gordon was walking towards his club trying to solve Mrs. Pushing's riddle. He had not gone very far when his mind was diverted by finding himself face to face with a familiar countenance and the realisation that a hand was held out to him.

"Oh—how d'y'do," said Loame, in his perfectly modulated British monotone, as if they had parted yesterday and were sure of meeting to-morrow.

"How are you?" ejaculated Gordon. "Well, you are the last man I expected to see. Now that you have come," he went on, as he took in his friend's attire, and recognised, with some chagrin, those same old grey tweeds and clod-hoppers, "now that you have come, you must let me do something for you. Shall I give you a card for the Tavern Club?"

"I've just been to the Athletic and had a Turkish bath," said Loame. "Some one who came over on the Pullman with me introduced me there. His name is Snopper."

Gordon winced. The Athletic Club was as plebeian as a policeman. Snopper, he knew, made boots—the best boots, to be sure—but, a tradesman! "Where are you stopping?" he demanded, and was told the name of one of the commercial hotels. "You ought to have on an overcoat," he said again, as he was preparing to break away from his steamer acquaintance, with the inward conviction that he had been a great ass to pick up promiscuous friends.

"Why? To cover up these old togs?" asked Loame ingenuously, with a glance of affection at the grey tweeds. "My dear Gordon, I wouldn't part with 'em for anything; there are fourteen pockets in 'em. Besides, I never wear an overcoat except at night."

Gordon held out his hand, not very cordially.

"I must go," he said. "I have no end of engagements. We are rushing things in our set just now—busy times, you know. Half a hundred things on hand—dinners, balls, and all sorts. Mrs. Pushing has a big affair on for Wednesday, and I'm kind of envoy. I wish you had come with a few letters—just as credentials."

Loame laughed good-naturedly.

"I shall not present any letters," he said. "Perhaps I may meet you again, or we may possibly run across each other in England. *Au revoir!*"

He walked away briskly with his long, clod-hopping stride, and was soon out of sight.

It could not have been said of Loame that he was in any way vain. The tweeds proved that, although they were unquestionably becoming to his big, blonde manliness; nevertheless, as he walked along he could not help thinking to himself "that he would like to take it out of that little Gordon, somehow." He did not resent the Bostonian's inferences of his inferiority; some natures are above such smallness. He realised perfectly well that, so far as Boston was concerned, Gordon was pretty sure of his ground—such insecure ground as it was—but he did wish, with a not unkindly smile, "that he could have that little popinjay just half an hour in England." . . . And then, suddenly, a brilliant idea struck him.

He went back to the Commercial Hotel and packed his Gladstones, strapped his gun cases, paid his bill, tipped the servants and called a cab. In less than half an hour he was at the Hotel Brunswick, where he registered as Lord Rayne, and took the most expensive apartments in the house.

On the following day all the morning papers announced his arrival, and in the afternoon several cards were brought to him. Among them was that of Mr. Richard T. Pushing, and Mr. Pushing was received.

Lord Rayne appeared faultlessly attired in a black coat, which made him look very tall and dignified. He welcomed Pushing cordially, and the two men discussed current topics, and mundane affairs, with the cognisance of men of the world. They soon discovered that they had many mutual friends, and, in fact, one of Pushing's sisters had married a cousin of Rayne's, and lived not far from the family seat at Haylestone.

"Now, you must let me do what I can for you while you are here," he said. "I shall send you a card for the 'Somerset' at once, and on whatever night you are free you must dine with me and some of my cronies there. In the meanwhile my wife will send you an invitation to some big 'jamboree' she's got on to-morrow, and if there is anything I can do in any way I shall expect you to let me know at once."

Thus, on the night of the "jamboree," Mrs. Pushing was in high feather. She had secured a foreign lion to roar in her menagerie. The great double house—two houses, indeed, thrown into one—was resplendent, and Mrs. Pushing was the most resplendent thing of all.

She was smiling radiantly when Amory Gordon arrived, and he understood at once that she had secured some innovation with which to titillate the jaded palate of her social epicures. "Such a piece of luck," she said to him the first thing. "Lord Rayne has just come to Boston, and I made Dick hunt him down immediately, and he is sure to be here to-night."

It was very late indeed when Lord Rayne was announced. There was a momentary cessation in the buzz and hum of conversation as the Englishman appeared.

Mrs. Pushing went forward and met her guest of honour graciously, who bowed over her hand. Gordon, standing near his hostess, looked as if he saw an apparition.

"Let me introduce you to Lord Rayne," said Mrs. Pushing smiling.

The two men bowed.

"I think we have met—before," said the Englishman.

"Possibly. I am not clever at remembering *names*," replied Gordon stiffly.

"Nor faces, perhaps?" asked the other. "Recollecting people whom one has met before is more often a matter of good manners than of good eyesight." And then he turned away to follow his hostess, and to go through a series of presentations.

That evening added to Mrs. Pushing's reputation. She was hostess *par excellence*, and Lord Rayne made himself very popular indeed.

When it was all over, and everybody was making preparations for departure, Gordon went up to his quondam friend.

"See here, Loame," he said slowly, "this may amuse you immensely, but *I* don't see the joke."

"I think it's awfully funny," said the Englishman. "I've been laughing in my sleeve the whole time," and he broke into his big, hearty, boyish guffaw.

"It must stop," asserted Gordon, sternly. "These people are my friends, and I won't have them imposed upon."

"I told you we might meet somewhere," replied the Englishman, with great quietness: "and I thought it far more likely that I should see you in your set than that you would ever see me in mine. So I simply registered at an hotel as Lord Rayne. I am not imposing upon anybody in the least, my friend—unless it be upon you, because, you see, I really am Lord Rayne—and here are some of the letters which I didn't think it worth while to present." He handed one letter to Gordon.

It was addressed to Mrs. Richard Pushing, introducing Lord Rayne, the only son of the Marquess of Haylestone and Snowdowne, and was from the Duchess of Harchester.

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SIXPENCE.

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A TALE OF INDIAN SORCERY.

SOME fifteen years ago, while quartered with the ——th Native Infantry at Seceune, Madras Presidency, I was an interested eye-witness of a strange case of Indian necromancy.

My wife Laura, three children and myself, occupied one of the smaller bungalows in the regimental lines. In India the houses are built low, of only one story, with a thatched roof, and, mostly, with a covered-in verandah going straight round the house.

The servants do not live or sleep in the house, but occupy each a separate *godown*, or hut, in the compound, which is inclosed in a high brick wall or natural hedge. The garden gate opening from the carriage drive is kept shut, as a rule. I was very particular in this, as my wife had a horror of the countless beggars and lepers who are always hanging round in the hope of obtaining stray coin.

It was the eve of the Residency ball, the largest and most important dance in the season's festivities, and one at which every lady donned her smartest finery. My wife had, as usual on such occasions, spread her ball dress upon the bed early in the day; her fan, gloves, bangles, together with my studs and sleeve links, she put on the toilet table. A quaint, massive gold collarette, with a heart-shaped locket attached, she placed round the neck of a little marble figure which always stood in the centre of her dressing table, and served for a stand for her watch and chain.

The dressing table stood by the open window, and was easily seen by anyone in the verandah or garden outside.

Our bungalow was then undergoing the usual whitewashing deemed necessary in India every six or eight months.

The two men employed on the work—a father and son—were well known to me as thoroughly honest workmen. We had, therefore, no scruples in giving them free access over the house. Our servants and ayahs had been with us some years and were most trustworthy.

At eight o'clock, Laura retired to her room to dress, while I smoked a last cheroot in the verandah. I was startled from my pleasant reverie, about half an hour later, by Laura rushing out of the bedroom with her hair only half done and in evident distress.

"Oh, John, what shall I do? I can't find my gold necklace anywhere, and I am sure I put it on the toilette table this morning."

Of course a search was immediately made, and the room turned upside down; but the locket and chain had completely disappeared.

Several days went by and the necklet was not found. We had reluctantly been obliged to call in the aid of the police. Even they were at fault. The missing jewels had been spirited away, leaving no trace behind.

One morning, after turning out the bedroom, looking under the mats, shaking the curtains and moving the furniture for the ninety-ninth time, our Durzee, or tailor, asked permission to speak to me.

"Please, sare," he said, with a low salaam, "master, missus, servant—all no find chain; pleeceman, too, no find. Master please let me call one black Fakir man. He know everything; he soon find thief."

Of course I laughed and pooh-poohed the idea; but Nadiussen got round my wife, and she at length persuaded me to consent to his calling in a Fakir or fetish man to charm back the stolen article.

On Monday morning, about ten days after the theft, all our servants, the two white-washers, Laura, the children, and myself assembled in the front garden.

The Fakir, a weird, gaunt old man, rolled in a cumley (or blanket), and whose face and body were smeared with greasy white and yellow paint, directed us to sit on the short, dry, grass in an unbroken circle.

Standing in the centre of us, he soon lighted a small fire of dried twigs and grasses. As the flames leapt up and licked his face and hands, he chanted a peculiar low sing-song, and from time to time threw sweet-smelling aromatic herbs into the fire.

After this had gone on for about twenty minutes, he asked a few questions as to when and how the necklace had been lost; also, if all those in and about the house at that time were now present.

Being answered in the affirmative, he took a flat tin platter in his hand, which contained a small quantity of unboiled rice. Carefully making the round of the circle, he bade us each take a few grains of the rice in our left hands. When all had been supplied, he went back to the fire and told us to chew the rice carefully, watching us closely the while.

Uncooked rice is not pleasant to eat at the best of times, but under the present circumstances I, for one, had some difficulty in masticating it. The children rather enjoyed the fun; and just as I thought we had all safely accomplished our task, Punnyiah, the baby's nurse, and Kurroo, the white-washer's son, spluttered and coughed, and nearly choked themselves in endeavouring to swallow the raw grain. Their efforts were useless, and they were both obliged to spit out the half-chewed rice.

Immediately the Fakir started forward, and, clutching the woman and boy by their arms, dragged them within the circle. Still holding them, one with each hand, his body became perfectly rigid, his cumley dropped from his shoulders, his eyes nearly started from his head, and from their vacant look and the appearance of his body he had evidently gone off in a sort of trance.

Punnyiah turned a sickly yellow, and trembled in every limb. Kurroo's teeth chattered.

Slowly letting each word drop from his mouth, the Fakir began to speak in his native tongue.

Clearly and minutely he described the interior of the ayah's *godown*, and made us understand that the lost necklace (which he described as clearly as if he held it before him), was lying across one of the stones which form a native fireplace.

It seemed that Punnyiah was quite innocent of the theft, and her *godown* had only been used as a hiding place by the whitewasher's son.

This young man, though brought up conscientiously by his parents, was led astray by some wild young companions. Having lately taken to gambling, and being in much need of money, the lad was tempted by the sight of the jewels on my wife's dressing table, and had taken the chain and locket with the intention of pawning them, hoping to replace them when his luck had turned. Caution prevented his pawning the necklace at once.

On this particular morning, hearing that a Fakir had been sent for, and having all the superstitious beliefs of his class, he threw the necklet (which he always carried on his person) on the fire as he passed the ayah's *godown*, in the hope that it would be destroyed.

When the Fakir ceased speaking his fingers relaxed their hold, his eyelids quivered, and his body regained its normal state.

Folding his dark-brown blanket closely round his shrunken form, he made several low salaams, and informed me that his work was done.

Motioning all to keep their places, I and my head Peen went to Punnyiah's *godown*, and, sure enough, lying across the stones of the ayah's fire was the locket and chain, blackened and charred by the half-smouldering fire.

On the police being informed that the necklace was found, Punnyiah was taken to prison. My wife was beside herself with grief at the loss of baby's nurse.

The white-washer, in grief and sorrow at his son's disgrace, brought the boy up and forced him to make a confession. I did not press the charge, and Kurroo was let off with a light sentence.

Punnyiah returned to our household, to be petted and made much of by Laura and the servants.

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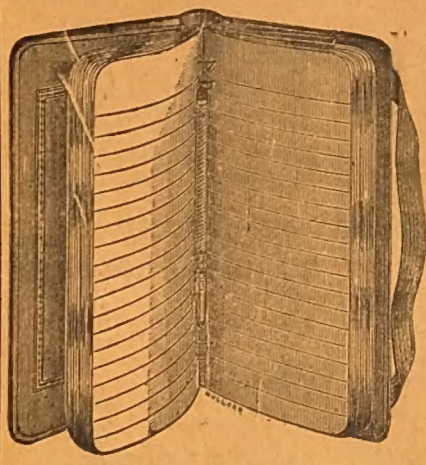

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